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TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, PINT,RS
SUBJECT: LUNCH WITH YUMASHEV

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(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR JAMES F. COLLINS. REASON: 1.5 (B) AND (D).

1. ~~(S)~~ I HAD LUNCH AT SPASO 9/24 WITH YUMASHEV AND WENT OVER A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS. YUMASHEV DISMISSED RUMORS OF YELTSIN'S RESIGNATION AND STRESSED THAT BOTH SETS OF ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED. HE KNEW YELTSIN HIMSELF SET GREAT STORE BY THE NEED TO EFFECT A PEACEFUL HAND-OVER TO HIS SUCCESSOR THROUGH THE BALLOT BOX. FURTHERMORE ANY EARLY ELECTIONS WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR PUTIN TO ACHIEVE THE PRESIDENCY AS HE NEEDED TIME TO GARNER POPULARITY AND DEVELOP A TRACK RECORD.

2. ~~(S)~~ YUMASHEV WAS VERY, VERY HIGH ON PUTIN. HE CLAIMED PUTIN HAD SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE A WELL-ORGANIZED, DECISIVE LEADER IN HIS PREVIOUS POSITIONS AND HAD A SPECIAL TALENT FOR ACQUIRING THE TRUST OF HIS INTERLOCUTORS WHETHER THEY BE GENERALS, GOVERNORS OR THE STRANGE FOLK WHO LEAD THE SPECIAL SERVICES. STEPASHIN, IN CONTRAST, WHILE A DECENT MAN, COULD NEVER SAY NO TO PEOPLE AND PROVED TOO WEAK. YUMASHEV FELT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY WOULD SEE THAT PUTIN SUPPORTS STABLE ECONOMIC POLICIES THAT PROMOTE GROWTH. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE THOUGHT PUTIN WOULD GARNER THE SUPPORT OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF RUSSIAN VOTERS -- PEOPLE, LIKE HIMSELF BORN IN THE EARLY FIFTIES (HE NOTED YAVLINSKIY, STEPASHIN AND PUTIN WERE ALL BORN IN 1952). ALREADY HIS POPULARITY RATINGS ARE RISING ESPECIALLY AS MORE AND MORE RUSSIANS APPROVE OF HIS HANDLING OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS AND SECURITY ISSUES. HE CONSIDERED THE SPONTANEOUS APPLAUSE THAT GREETED PUTIN'S DUMA PERFORMANCE ON DAGESTAN THIS WEEK A RARE AND SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT.

3. ~~(S)~~ ON THE DUMA ELECTIONS, YUMASHEV CONSIDERED THE PRIMAKOV-LUZHKOV BLOC STRONG AND ABLE TO TAKE VOTES FROM THE COMMUNISTS. ZHIRINOVSKIY PRESENTS A SERIOUS PROBLEM BECAUSE OF THE CRIMINALS ON HIS DELEGATE LIST THAT WOULD PRECLUDE KREMLIN BACKING. HE HOPED CURRENT LAWS COULD BE USED TO PREVENT PEOPLE LIKE KRASNOYARSK DON BYKOV FROM RUNNING ON THE LDPR TICKET. HE SPOKE OPTIMISTICALLY ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR THE NEWLY MINTED





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"EDINSTVO" REGIONAL BLOC TO BE LED BY EMERGENCIES MINISTER SHOIGOU WHOM HE CONSIDERED A PROMISING POLITICIAN. SHOIGOU HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH MANY OF THE GOVERNORS WHO HAVE BENEFITED FROM EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY SHOIGOU. FURTHERMORE SHOIGOU CAN USE HIS STAFF LOCATED IN EVERY REGION TO ASSIST HIS BLOC'S ELECTORAL EFFORTS -- OF COURSE IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH RUSSIAN LAW, YUMASHEV QUICKLY ADDED. MANY GOVERNORS HE CLAIMED WERE WARY OF LUZHKOVA AND THIS WOULD DRAW THEM CLOSER TO EDINSTVO ALTHOUGH RIGHT NOW THEY ARE HESITANT TO COMMIT.

4. ~~(C)~~ FURTHER ON THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE, YUMASHEV CLAIMED PRIMAKOV HAD TOLD HIM PERSONALLY WHEN HE TOOK OVER THE OVR BLOC CAMPAIGN THAT HE WOULD DEFINITELY RUN FOR PRESIDENT BECAUSE HE WAS NEEDED TO BRING RUSSIA STABILITY. LUZHKOVA, HE ASSERTED, HAD NOT YET DECIDED ON WHETHER TO RUN AND WAS FEARFUL OF LOSING EVERYTHING INCLUDING MOSCOW IF HE RAN AND LOST. LUZHKOVA'S DEPUTY MAYORS ARE ALSO AGAINST HIS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT LEST THEY TOO LOSE THEIR LUCRATIVE POSITIONS TO LUZHKOVA'S SUCCESSOR IN MOSCOW. YUMASHEV NOTED THAT YELTSIN WAS PERSONALLY NOT CONCERNED ABOUT HOW HE WOULD BE TREATED AFTER HE LEAVES OFFICE, SINCE HE FELT PEOPLE WOULD APPRECIATE THAT HE HAD OVERSEEN A MORE OR LESS PEACEFUL TRANSITION FOR RUSSIA. YUMASHEV THOUGHT ONLY LUZHKOVA WOULD TAKE VENGEANCE ON YELTSIN IF ELECTED PRESIDENT BECAUSE OF HIS UNREMITTING BITTERNESS OVER BEING PASSED OVER FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP WHEN CHERNOMYRDIN WAS FIRST DISMISSED. YUMASHEV RECALLED WHEN HE HAD PERSONALLY GIVEN THE NEWS TO LUZHKOVA THAT HE COULD NOT BE PM, LUZHKOVA EMOTIONALLY DENOUNCED YELTSIN AS AN INGRATE.

5. ~~(C)~~ ON THE MONEY LAUNDERING SCANDAL, YUMASHEV ASSERTED HE WAS CALM ABOUT ACCUSATIONS THAT ANYONE OF YELTSIN'S FAMILY HAD OVERSEAS ACCOUNTS BECAUSE HE KNEW WITHOUT ANY DOUBT FROM TATIANA DATCHENKO HERSELF THAT THEY HAVE NO ACCOUNTS ABROAD. STILL HE UNDERSTOOD THAT MOST RUSSIANS WILL NEVER BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE. HE EXCORIATED GUSINSKIY AND IGOR MALASHENKO FOR GOING BEYOND THE PALE IN SMEARING THE YELTSIN FAMILY, ESPECIALLY AFTER ALL THAT YELTSIN AND HE HIMSELF HAD DONE TO HELP GUSINSKIY IN THE PAST.

6. ~~(C)~~ ON U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS, YUMASHEV FELT MANY IN THE RUSSIAN ELITE ARE CONCERNED AND DISMAYED THAT MANY AMERICANS NOW CONSIDER RUSSIA A THOROUGHLY CRIMINAL STATE AND THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO ANY CLEAN BUSINESS IN RUSSIA. THIS NEGATIVE IMAGE CAN ONLY GROW WORSE AS THE AMERICAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN PROCEEDS AND RUSSIA BECOMES AN AMERICAN POLITICAL ISSUE. ON A BRIGHTER SIDE, HE THOUGHT U.S.-RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS HAD SUCCESSFULLY SURVIVED THE KOSOVO CRISIS MORE OR LESS INTACT BECAUSE THE FOUNDATION WAS FIRM. THE KOSOVO EXPERIENCE AND EVEN THE CURRENT MONEY LAUNDERING SCANDAL HAVE HAD THE IRONIC EFFECT OF BRINGING OUR SERVICES AND AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTS CLOSER TOGETHER AS WE GRAPPLE WITH THESE PROBLEMS. HE CONSIDERED PRIMAKOV THE ONLY PERSON CAPABLE OF DOING SIGNIFICANT HARM TO THE FOUNDATION OF U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS.

7. ~~(C)~~ ON THE TRANSNEFT LEADERSHIP SHAKE-UP, YUMASHEV ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT WAS HANDLED BADLY AND THAT PUTIN HAD MADE A

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MISTAKE IN NOT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTION HIMSELF. HE DID NOT CONSIDER THE MATTER A CHALLENGE TO PUTIN'S LEADERSHIP AND EXPLAINED THAT KIRIYENKO INCUMBENT SAVELYOV HAD TO BE OUSTED QUICKLY BY SEPTEMBER 19 BECAUSE HE WAS REGISTERING AS DUMA CANDIDATE ON THAT DATE AND RUSSIAN LAW WOULD HAVE FORBIDDEN HIS SUBSEQUENT FIRING.

8. ~~(C)~~ I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPRESS ON YUMASHEV THE NEED FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE THE MONEY LAUNDERING INVESTIGATIONS SERIOUSLY AND DO SOMETHING TO ADDRESS CRIME. I POINTED OUT THAT A RUSSIA SEEN TO BE ACTIVELY GRAPPLING WITH CRIME WOULD NOT ONLY HELP ASSUAGE AMERICAN CONCERNS BUT COULD EVEN REDOUBT TO THE CREDIT OF THE CURRENT RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT IN

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THE EYES OF THE RUSSIAN ELECTORATE. HE TOOK THE POINT.

9. ~~to~~ I ALSO URGED THAT YUMASHEV USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH VOLOSHIN AND OTHERS IN THE P.A. TO ENSURE THAT THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWS ON HIS KEY PRIORITIES ARE FREQUENTLY AND CLEARLY PUBLICIZED, PARTICULARLY HIS COMMITMENT TO HOLDING FAIR ELECTIONS ON TIME. THIS COULD HELP STAMP DOWN THE RUMOR MONGERING THAT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE THE SOURCE OF REPORTING BY WESTERN MISSIONS. I ENCOURAGED GREATER CONTACT BETWEEN THE P.A. AND WESTERN MISSIONS AS A MEANS FOR COMBATING RUMORS THAT HARM RUSSIA'S IMAGE. HE AGREED AND SAID HE WOULD PUSH VOLOSHIN TO SEE ME SOON (HE GAVE NO INDICATION THAT VOLOSHIN'S HEAD IS ON THE BLOCK, THOUGH RUMORS ABOUND OF HIS IMMINENT DEMISE).

10. ~~(C)~~ YUMASHEV LOOKED TANNED AND RESTED. HE HAD JUST COME BACK FROM ENGLAND WHERE HE CLAIMED HE WAS STUDYING ENGLISH (PROBABLY NOT WHERE HE OBTAINED HIS TAN). HE WAS RELISHING LIFE WITHOUT BODYGUARDS AND BEING ABLE TO DRIVE HIS OWN CAR. IT IS QUITE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT HE REMAINS DEEPLY ENGAGED IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE AND STILL RETAINS HIS IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO YELTSIN'S INNER SANCTUM.
COLLINS

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